1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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593 688 152 at the time that it was to his clan as though she had killed a strong man. Her husband said nothing, but hurried her to a mission on a nearby island to shield her against possible attacks of his own people. He risked being injured himself for this, but he was more concerned for her. This was not merely because of her economic or child-bearing value. He had an older wife, who had borne him a daughter, whom he loved even more than his younger wife; and the older woman was still a sexual mate and a very able food-gatherer. Yet he told me he would have let them kill the old woman, for she was "rubbish," but that he liked the young gaile "too much" and he could not let them kill her.

593 578 837 One further instance may be cited. One of Benaitjimaloi's three wives, the oldest, was notorious for her promiscuity. She had not only been beaten by him, but at one time all the people of a camp had thrashed her for her misconduct. Benaitjimaloi had acquired her by a runaway union. She had been caught in a sexual relation with Bindjerpuma. The husband fought the lover and then said to everybody that he was tired of her continual affairs, was through with her, and that she could go where she pleased. Then he gave her a thorough beating. One of the older men in the tribe, and one of the most intelligent, said, "He won't give her away. I see inside his head. He beat her after he said he'd thrown her away; that shows that he likes that woman too much." Benaitjimaloi kept his wife.

595 484 342 462 A man and all his wives live in the same camp. If he is going on a long journey he usually leaves some of them with their parents, taking only one with him. When a house is to be built the women usually construct the ordinary windbreak type, but sometimes a man helps them. The husband brings in the heavy stringy bark for the small, dome-shaped house used by most of the people during the rainy season. The women keep the house clean. It is felt that the house belongs to the man and the women.

595 578 The wives live in a fair degree of amiability, but there is sometimes jealousy over their husband.

Dorng, a man past middle age, but still very active, had three wives, of whom Opossum was the youngest. He complained one day:

"My wives growl at each other all the time. The two old ones are good friends, but they are jealous of Opossum. They say to her, 'Why don't you get another man? This man is our husband. He made our children come. He belongs to us. He doesn't belong to you.' Opossum says, 'Where am I to go? My other dué are too old; I'd be the same as dead if I lived with

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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313 Wood is chosen for its degree of hardness and weight and also for its shape according to the purposes of the object to be made. The main forms used are (1) long, slender, light (or heavy) shafts; (2) hollow logs; (3) roots with a well-defined arc; (4) long, straight, slender trunks with thick roots running off at a right angle from the shaft; (5) forked sticks; (6) ends of branches with many twigs and leaves; (7) any variety of dry wood; and (8) very large light wood tree trunks.

314 Three types of bark are used: (1) a long, thick, wide type found on the trunk of the larger eucalyptus; (2) thin paper-like bark from the Melaleuca; and (3) long thin fibers of root bark easily macerated.

Many varieties of leaves are technological material. They are usually [252] gathered in bundles by breaking off branches, but one large-leafed species is used singly as a plate on which to put fresh meat for cooking.

The long reeds of the water-lily ponds, spear grass particularly, and many other varieties of reeds are utilized.

237 The few animal materials used are, from land animals: kangaroo fat, kangaroo gut, kangaroo leg bones, bird feathers, bird bones (particularly leg), opossum fur, opossum gut and human hair; from sea animals: sting-ray prongs, fish and shark vertebrae, bivalve shells, and the melon shell.

Deposits of red ocher and pipe clay are mined along certain portions 317 of the seacoast. Yellow ocher is found in outcroppings. Round river 316 stones about the size of goose eggs are gathered. Diorite stones are also used. Quartzite is quarried from outcroppings. Ordinary earth and sand are used in making houses and ceremonial objects on the ground. Rock 342 ledges forming caves are utilized as shelters during the rainy season. 312 Rock basins which catch rain water are used as types of primitive cisterns to supply water in the absence of wells and fresh-water courses.

3. *General Description of Technical Methods Used in Making Raw Materials into Cultural Artifacts*

000 Only the general methods by which raw material is formed into artifacts will be discussed here. Each specific technique will be described in the section dealing with the articles manufactured.

412 The chief tools used with food are the ground stone axe,[4] a knife (formerly made of bone, but, since the Malay contacts, of iron), and a variety of bivalve shell.

322 Cylindrical wooden articles are made by cutting down a tree or

[4] The iron tomahawk is now used in its place.

1; Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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884 5. Snail shell rattles are manufactured.
6. A bark house is constructed and is painted with ceremonial designs.

1. While the group of headdress dances of Section F dances is being performed, two emblems are under construction. They are large representations of the Dua kangaroo and Yiritja kangaroo tails. The smaller [211] emblems previously mentioned function as message sticks for the kangaroos who announce the ceremony to the other tribes; these larger ones are used as emblems in the ceremony. They are brought out by the dancers who jump over each other. Yiritja jump over the Dua and Dua over the Yiritja in the same manner as our children play leap frog.

2. If the ceremony is to last two years the snake dance ground is not excavated, since it forms a part of what is considered the final portion of the Ulmark. If it is decided to complete the ceremony in one season, the Yiritja and Dua kangaroo messengers dig the dance place to a depth of a man's shoulder. It is in the center of the dance ground and well protected by heavy clumps of jungle growth. It has the same triangular shape as the snake ground in Section D and the one found in the Djungguan ceremony (which is not dug but is on the surface of the ground); but in addition it has a pathway dug to one side of the triangle. It is the python snake's body. It is supposed to face the southeast both in this ceremony and in the Djungguan. Bushes are piled in it at the head of the ground.

3. The women's dance ground is only a cleared space in the center of the general camp.

4. While the men are digging the triangular snake ground, the women, of both home and visiting clans, clear a small path which encircles the whole of the men's ceremonial grounds. (It winds and twists like the track left by a huge python.)

5. After the excavating has ceased, the men gather dry snail shells. [237 534] These are painted with red ocher on which is dotted white clay. A half dozen of these shells are strung on one string and tied to a spear-thrower. Several of these snail-shell rattles are made.

6. A bark house is also built on the ceremonial grounds. The house [342 531] is the same in structure as those used in the rainy season. The interior walls are painted with realistic and geometric figures (which illustrate the story of the two Wawilak sisters).

884 713 *Native Interpretation.*—The triangular and the women's dance ground are identical with the Djungguan dance places and are looked

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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The same varieties of bivalve shells were found throughout the excavation. No stratification of any kind was found. The same tools were discovered a few inches from the bottom (as well as red ocher and white clay paints) that are being used by the modern aborigines of the area. 172

A ground stone axe was found within six inches from the bottom, or eight feet beneath the surface. This seemed to indicate a great antiquity for this implement in this area and therefore at least for its appearance in Australia. The finding of this axe was the most important positive contribution made by the two mounds that were excavated, since it was a positive proof of the long use of this artifact in North Australia.

The age of the shell mound must be considerable. The mound was only one of three larger ones and a number of smaller ones within a few hundred yards. All were composed of a compact mass of broken bivalve shells. The supply of bivalves in this area appears unlimited and forms a large part of the diet of the people; however, the population of the clans of this island was very small and could not have numbered more than twenty-five or thirty people, though during the shell and ritual season it might, for two or three months, rise to eighty or a hundred people; the year-round average could not have been more than approximately forty individuals. The natives said that before the mission came, no one lived there during the height of the rainy season because of its being badly infested with mosquitoes. It seems incredible that mounds the size of these could have been built by such a small group, and only a long period of occupation could account for the quantities of broken shells and the several large mounds.

APPENDIX II

MURNGIN ARTIFACTS

1. Shelters

The Murngin dwellings have a periodical alternation of types. During a good part of the dry season when the winds are not blowing, the only shelter is some tree underneath which a semicircle of ground has been smoothed. In the evening, if the winds are blowing cold, windbreaks are made. Sticks are pushed in the ground, protruding three or four feet, and brush is placed against them, possibly with the addition of a stone or two to keep the brush in place. 342

In addition to these very rudimentary summer shelters, the Murngin possess a number of more advanced house types:

Type 1.—For this type of house, usually built by women, easily bent sticks about six feet long are gathered. The overlapping ends of two are [462]

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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342 tied together with pandanus leaf. The free ends are stuck into two holes which have been dug about four feet apart, to form the hut's front arch. Other sticks are planted about a foot apart in a semicircle in back of this arch. These are bent over and attached to the center of the main front arch, forming a hollow quarter-globe, whose closed side is always to windward. A woman then gathers paper bark, covers the whole of the skeleton with several layers, and lays medium-sized logs against the bark structure to keep the wind from blowing the cover away. A fire is always made in front of the structure to keep off flies, mosquitoes, sand flies, and other insects. Outside, at the entrance of the hut, one sees singing sticks (bil-mel), paper-bark receptacles, and other such articles, and here spear-thrower and spears are stuck when the man is present, while inside personal baskets of the men and women are kept.

Type 2.—Men are more active in the building of the second type of house. They select a large stringy-barked eucalyptus tree, cut the bark off its trunk for a distance of eight to ten feet, and strip off and discard the outer bark. Six to eight pieces of the inside bark are usually gathered. Two parallel trenches are dug and the ends of the bark placed in them so that the whole forms a symmetrical archway. Usually two or three pieces of bark are put in the row, making a house with a total length of about seven feet. One end of the house is also covered with stringy bark, leaving one end open for a door. The structure is covered with a heavy coating of paper bark. Sand, stones, and logs are placed against the sides to function much like flying buttresses. They serve to keep the house firm in strong winds. The ground on the inside and in front of the house is hollowed out slightly. The excavating process continues through the winter months, until there is a rather deep hole where the occupants live, and a small-sized embankment in front from sand deposited on the "door step." All houses are built upon slightly raised ground where the sand is soft and comfortable.

Type 3.—This form of house is really a hybrid, and consists of the first and second types placed together, with the first forming the end and the second the length, making a larger and more elaborate hut.

Type 4.—Two sticks about four and one-half feet high are cut, each having a forked prong at one end. The other ends are sharpened and put into the ground about eight and one-half feet apart. A strong cross-piece is put into the forks to make a ridgepole. Stringy bark is then arched over the pole to make the two sides, or in some cases is leaned up against it so that the hut has only one side and is a kind of lean-to. Paper bark is placed on top of the stringy bark to keep out the rain, and sand and logs are added to keep it secure.

Type 5.—A piece of stringy bark about eight to nine feet long and three or four feet wide is placed semicircularly in the ground, sand being thrown on each side of it to form a windbreak. On the concave side the earth is

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

342 [513]

excavated. Paper bark is usually placed in the hole and is also used as a covering during cold nights.

With the exception of the lean-to variety of Types 4 and 5, all of the above huts are constructed for the rainy season. Because of the thicknesses of paper bark, they keep completely dry, even in the heavy tropical rains. The natives never build in advance in preparation for the rainy period. Nothing is done when the clouds first appear, even though it is realized that the rain may be upon them in a few hours. When it is decided that the rain will start within the next half hour or hour, the natives watch the tide carefully. If the tide is going out it pulls the clouds out to sea; but as soon as the tide changes they start building, and usually the rain is upon them before construction is finished. Instead of being displeased at being thoroughly soaked, there is usually much merriment and they seem to enjoy the great confusion and noise. Each house usually includes but one family. [592] The wives of a polygamous household always live under one roof.

A dry-season camp is largely a series of circles, each defined by an outline of strips of paper bark and by a border of sand that has been heaped up from excavating shallow holes for the occupants who compose a family group. No one ever walks over or through another's camp circle. 361

The people along the Goyder River and the farther interior always take to the high ground as soon as the wet season starts, and when the rains appear in earnest build long communal houses out of the arched bark of the eucalyptus. This communal house is well covered with paper bark, sand, and bushes to keep out the rain, and it is also excavated in the interior and made very low so that the wind will not be able to blow through it. It has two entrances, and fires are put at each end and sometimes in the interior. Frequently this house has two ridgepoles on forked sticks, and the bark is bent over them in the same manner as for Type 4. 342 361

Type 6: The Pile House.—In the Goyder and Glyde River district a special type of "pile" house with gabled superstructure and known as a "mosquito house" is constructed. No other people intensively studied by the author had this form. 342 [171]

Four forked poles about eight feet high are put in the ground. Ridge poles placed in the forks connect the uprights and form a rectangle.

Cross-pieces connect the ridgepoles and make a floor. On top of these grass is put, and then a final covering of heavy paper bark.

Four uprights half again as high as the first are then set up on the corners of the platform. At the center of each end of the floor are placed two more forked uprights about one-third again as high as the last four; a ridgepole connecting these last two uprights forms the peak of the gable. Two more ridgepoles also connect the pairs of poles on each side of the house. Rafters are then put down from the highest center ridgepole to the

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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342 outer two. They are placed at close intervals to form an almost continuous surface. Long pieces of stringy bark are then bent over the topmost ridgepole and down each side of the roof. On top of this are placed many thicknesses of paper bark, and finally stones and logs to make them fast.

The rafters are fastened to the ridgepoles by tying them with turtle rope and fiber string. They are sometimes made firm by making each with a forked end which is hooked on to the cross-piece, the two being tied together. Bark is used for the walls and sewn on to the edge of the floors and edge of the roof. The walls of the two ends of the house are only half filled in, so that the parts that remain open function as doors. Forked sticks are used as ladders.

[372] Even though this house is used in the hottest part of the year, many small fires are made on the ground beneath it, since it is primarily constructed to keep away mosquitoes which come in countless swarms at this time. The fires are so built that they smoke more than burn. Since the house is on high ground, running water caused by the large floods does not put the fires out.

342 After the rains, when mosquitoes are still bad, the house often consists
764 of only four piles with flooring. This latter type of structure is also used for platform burial when the corpse is not interred or placed in a tree; such a structure would be specially made for this purpose, and away from the camp.

342 Because this house is far more elaborate than any other type found in
174 northeastern Arnhem Land and has a very restricted distribution, and because of the known constant contact with the Malays who had pile dwellings, there comes a problem of whether it is of native invention or was brought by the Macassars. If one considers only the house itself without its related structures, there is a tendency to believe it comes from outside. This point of view does not orientate the invention to the rest of the material culture.

The essential elements of the mosquito house are: (1) the upright forked pole, and (2) the ridgepole connecting two forked sticks. The forked stick is found all over northern Australia and even southward. Baskets and other articles of the material culture are hung on it. The women use it when soaking the poisonous matter out of cycad palm nuts, and they lean it against the trunks of tall trees they wish to climb. In fact, it has a great variety of uses, and is a constant feature of native camps. The slightly more complex invention of two forked poles with a cross-piece is also found throughout Northern and down into Central Australia. It, too, is a constant feature of native camps and is used as a carryall, if trees are not available from which to hang things. The use of two parallel ridgepoles on four forked sticks as piles is only one step further in the elaboration of the essential idea of forked sticks with connecting ridgepoles. It seems, then, that the idea of a pile house is completely indigenous, although it

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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may be possible that Malay influence brought the final elaboration which formed the gabled superstructure. The pile house is never used in the water and is found only on raised ground. The native explanation of why the more eastern parts of the Murngin country do not possess the mosquito house is that there are not so many mosquitoes here and the ordinary hut with the fire in front works better than the mosquito house. It is probably true, since the morasses of the Goyder and Glyde Rivers breed more mosquitoes than any other part of the country.

Another type of shelter found in the north is the stone cave dwelling. Dwellings of this type are used during the wet season in the lonely hill country in the interior, on Wessel Island, and sporadically around Buckingham Bay.

2. Articles That Are Worn

Although the nights of the dry season are at times quite cold, no clothing has been invented or borrowed by these people, as were kangaroo skin cloaks farther south.

It has been said that need does not produce invention, and the Australian black has been pictured as an example of this theory. Such criticism is colored by the prejudices of our own social standards. The days in Arnhem Land are always warm. No clothes are needed for comfort. The occasional cold nights are made comfortable by windbreaks and small fires built to produce ample warmth. In other words, instead of using one of our methods, the Australian has utilized a different invention to combat the cold. During the rainy season clothes are a hindrance rather than a help.

It has been asserted further that the black lacked the intelligence to invent clothes, since as soon as he came in contact with white civilization he donned the habiliments of Caucasian culture. He has, around white settlements where native civilization has disappeared, adopted the clothing of western civilization, but this is not so much an adoption by his own culture of an element of white civilization to meet his needs, as a more or less complete abandonment of his own material culture and his adoption of the white men as his master and the white men's culture as his own. The wearing of clothing has done more harm, destroyed more natives, made the aborigine far less adapted to his natural surroundings in the north, than has almost any other element of white culture. His naked condition before the coming of the white man was far more appropriate to the country he lived in.

String.—String is basic to most of the articles worn by the Murngin. All string, composed of only two strands, is made of vegetable or animal fiber: the inner bark of certain trees (the hibiscus, in particular), the inner bark of their roots, and opossum fur or human hair. The string of vegetable matter is usually fine and carefully twisted, while the other is loosely woven

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OI17 Murngin OI17

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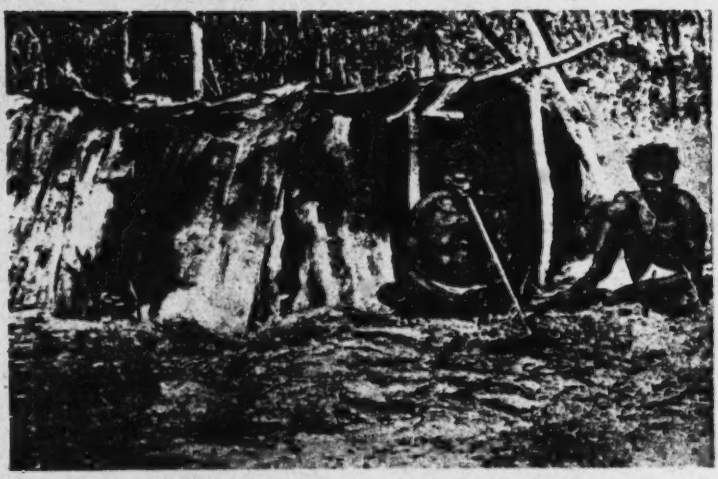

PLATE 3A. Wet-season bark hut, Arnhem Land

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PLATE 3B. Painting a design on bark, Oenpelli

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Muragia OII7

(iv) SHEETS OF BARK

The bark sheets were stripped from one of the local stringy-barks (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*). After having selected a tree of a size suitable for his purpose, and one free from knots and cracks, the aboriginal first made two cuts round the circumference of the tree, usually about three feet apart, then, loosening a strip of bark at the lower cut, pulled it upward, leaving a narrow vertical opening. Into this opening the native inserted the point of a sharpened stick, and gently levered the bark from the tree. The whole operation usually occupied about three minutes. The aboriginal then threw the bark, rough outer surface downward, on a large fire for a short time, after which he stripped off the outer fibrous bark until the inner denser portion was about three-sixteenths of an inch thick. In this condition the bark, being particularly flexible, was easily flattened by levelling a patch of sand, placing the bark on top, covering it with more sand, and leaving it until dry. The drying took several days to a fortnight, depending on the humidity of the atmosphere. Normally, these bark sheets were used for building the wet-weather shelters (Pl. 3A) on the inside of which the aborigines spent much of their spare time painting pictures.[47]

The method which I adopted was to ask the men to make bark paintings for me, seldom suggesting a subject. At the end of the day, the artists brought their work to my tent, related the associated myth, and explained the meanings of the designs. Under normal tribal conditions, most of the bark paintings are the result of idle hours, when the artist depicts subjects in which he is most interested. But this is not always so. In the Milingimbi and Oenpelli areas, the old men paint designs on sheets of bark which illustrate secret totemic myths. These are exhibited to the novitiates during their initiation and age-grading ceremonies.[48]

5. THE ARTISTS

Some writers suggest that only a limited number of aboriginal men are employed as artists.[49] This is not so. All men were willing to and could paint, although, naturally, some are more skilled than others. The men shown on Pl. 4 produced bark paintings that belonged to Groote Eylandt, Yirrkalla, Oenpelli and Liverpool River areas respectively.

Pl. 4B is *Nangapiana* from Groote Eylandt, who with his relatives, *Tutalara* and *Jaliaura*, produced many fine bark paintings. Pl. 21E and Pl. 25B are the work of *Nangapiana*. *Mini-mini*, mentioned by Adam,[50] also made a number of paintings. He did not, however, employ the fine brushwork of *Nangapiana*, although the results were attractive and colourful. Pl. 30C is *Mini-mini's* work.

47. As the supply of prepared sheets of bark at Yirrkalla and Oenpelli became exhausted, I provided the artists with sheets of rough-surfaced dark grey and green paper. The paintings on these sheets of paper can be distinguished in the illustrations by the smooth ground.
48. Warner (1937), p. 316; also p. 224.
49. Adam (1951), p. 163.
50. Adam (1951), p. 164.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
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CHAPTER I

THE CULTURAL PATTERN OF NORTH-EASTERN ARNHEM LAND SOCIETY

a. The Geographical Background:

The main centre with which we shall be dealing here is Yirrkalla, in the far north-eastern corner of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve. The surrounding area is thickly wooded, with jungles and mangrove swamps, fresh water streams and tidal rivers, long beaches broken by sheer cliffs, and occasional islands fairly close to the shore. 131 133 137

Yirrkalla itself takes its name from a fresh water creek that flows into the surf beside a long white curving beach. This creek drains a wide area of lagoon and swamp, its source far back in the hilly inland. Wide grass flats, easily inundated during the monsoonal rains, and dense jungles, lie in the back country not too far from the coast line. At Yirrkalla the Methodist Overseas Mission established a station some eleven years ago: and now a Mission house on a low cliff dominates the beach, where native huts, mostly of cast-off European timber and tin, are arranged in rows. Beyond the Mission house, on a smaller beach, are other huts; and a church, store-house, dispensary and garden complete the settlement. [103] [132] 797 [342] [177]

This Mission station is the centre for natives whose traditional home camps are at Blue Mud Bay, Trial and Caledon Bays and Port Bradshaw to the south, facing the Gulf of Carpentaria, while visitors come from Groote Eylandt, Woodah Island and Rose River. The Yirrkalla local groups belong mainly to Cape Arnhem, Bremer Island, Melville Bay, and the English Company Islands, as well as to Arnhem Bay: but natives from the Wessel and Elcho Islands, Milingimbi in the Crocodile Islands, and from the mainland to the west, do visit this region. Yirrkalla is thus a strategic base for anthropologists and missionaries who desire to contact members of various groups of a more or less similar cultural and linguistic background. 131 797 [122]

Geographically speaking, the Yirrkalla groups are comparatively isolated, for to-day only the Mission lugger calls at this depôt, with occasional visits by other Europeans who come by boat and 'plane. Yirrkalla is approximately 500 sea-miles east of Darwin, 130 miles

221 pations, and therefore, on the nature of their camps and
805 house types. It may be noted in passing that the seasonal
813 influence on their lives and occupations is well appreciated by the natives themselves, and that they divide the annual cycle into six or more phases or seasons which they name from the winds, the weather conditions, or from the food supplies which characterise them. And again, they will name these phases, and state without hesitation the appropriate occupational sites at each of them, and their activities and food supplies which depend upon these seasonal conditions, with an insight and a precision that no white man who is not a trained ecologist and well versed in botany and zoology, could approach.

[133] During the wet season the river courses rise quickly and
221 soon overflow their banks so that the country is flooded for
[137] miles. The grass, especially on the plains, grows rank and
● 342 high—often more than six feet—and the people are con-
361 centrated in semi-permanent wet season camps in which the population may exceed one hundred. Here they lead an almost sedentary existence in contrast with their active nomadic life in the south-east season. At this time they construct houses, sometimes of large size—thatched with bark of tea-tree (*Melaleuca*) or of stringybark (*Eucalyptus tetrodonta*). Some of these houses are well built and are provided with sleeping platforms under which fires can be lighted as a protection against mosquitoes. They are also equipped with racks to carry food and utensils. Each house type has its own traditional form, type of construction and distinctive name, and is often developed in adaptation to a particular environment, or is determined by the building materials available in the vicinity. Nine or ten types of houses or shelters are recognised in Arnhem Land. These vary from simple breakwinds built on the windward side in the "dry"

[352]
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9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
OI17 Murngin OI17

or south-east season, and "shades" of boughs in the very hot dry weather, to the crescentic and semi-circular houses thatched with teatree bark, and the more elaborate rectangular huts of stringybark which are used in the wet season, and are of a more or less permanent nature. The large rectangular houses were, however, probably developed or modified as a result of Malay or Macassar influence.

When the flood waters subside after the storms and rains of the north-west season, the large wet season camps break up into small groups consisting of a few families, which disperse to lead a nomadic life within the confines of their own clan territories. Each phase, each season, has its own related food supply, and this is the chief factor which determines the daily activities of the people and also the area in which they are to be found at any time of the year. As the season advances and the grass dries, they practise systematic burning of the country in conjunction with their hunting activities. This is not a random business; it is well organised, and is carried out by the men as a communal enterprise, although in a restricted and controlled manner, with "drives" for kangaroos, wallabies or other game.

The actual burning of the grass is directed by the old men of the clan, or by others who have an hereditary right, especially by men of other clans who stand, under the kinship system, in the relationship of *wäkku* (son, woman speaking; sister's son, man speaking) that is, men to whom the clan is *yindipulo* (see pp. 11, 12). Such men are necessarily members of the opposite moiety, and to those unfamiliar with the people, they may appear to usurp the authority, to dominate the affairs, of clans to which they do not belong. But it is part of the traditional behaviour in this area, that certain people of *dua* moiety carry out some of the ritual tasks for members of certain clans of *yiritja* moiety to which

ceremonial exchange system. Besides weapons and fishing lines, the heavier types of rope as well as most of the larger fishing nets, are made by men. In the coastal groups where bark canoes are used, the making of these craft is also the work of the men. In the case of dugout canoes, a man either makes his own canoe, a long and laborious task taking weeks or months of time and requiring a good deal of intensive hard work, or he employs a craftsman to make it for him, in which case he assumes the responsibility for the organisation of the work and for the payments involved. The large, coarsely woven fish traps, which may be five or six feet, or even more, in length, as well as other paraphernalia associated with fishing, are usually made by the men, although women may also assist.

How subtle may be the driving force which induces the natives to work, is shown by the following example. During the south-east or dry season the people rarely build houses, but are content with breakwinds, until the north-west or wet season. Even then they generally delay the work of gathering bark and other necessary building materials until the actual onset of the rains. During a patrol at the beginning of the north-west when we were debating as to whether a heavy storm that threatened was really about to break, one of the natives said "*ŋärru tobitj*",[13] "my muscles have twitched", (and therefore it will not rain). And such is the belief of the natives in these portents that the people would not go out and collect the necessary paperbark to make a proper camp, despite the threatening sky.

[13] Muscular twitching, called *tobitj*, is an omen or portent which is believed to give warning of a forthcoming event, or to foretell the approach of an enemy or a visitor. The part of the body in which the twitching occurs indicates the relationship in which the visitor stands to the person who receives the warning.

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9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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[facing p. 42]

Plate 2. The family is the unit of social life and lives a more or less independent existence within the horde. A man of Blue Mud Bay with his wives and young children. The breakwind of boughs is the only form of shelter used at night during most of the dry season.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

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AT YIRRKALA

Yulengor clearing land for gardens

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WET-SEASON HUT OF BARK SHEETS

The woman is making string from bark fibre

[facing p 23]

361 of carapace scattered in the sand justified the island's reputation for good turtle hunting.

Camps like this have been in use for centuries, and around several of them are hundreds of tons of shells, bones, and refuse. One mound in the Crocodile Islands is over twenty [172] feet high and covers an area of approximately five hundred square yards; when an experimental cut was made into the centre, it was found to consist entirely of shellfish shells.

•341 Camp shelters are the crudest imaginable. Prince Petr Kropotkin goes so far as to say that aborigines live in holes in the sand; and as in the case of many misrepresentations, there is some truth in his statement. When the wind is light they scoop up the sand on the windward side and sleep in the depression beside a smouldering fire, and if the wind is cold, a thick wind-break is pushed into the sand. Why should they go to more trouble when they move off the following morning?

In the rainy season nomads become uncomfortably cold and wet and build more elaborate shelters of sticks covered [824] with paper-bark, or of bark from the stringy-bark eucalypt, curved inside out, so that when a number of curved sheets are placed side by side they look like miniature tunnels. Roomy and easily rearranged, these 'balas' suit the winds and rain and sometimes last for the duration of the wet season.

364 Yulengor have no knowledge of sanitation, and they are [361] never in one camp long enough for this form of cleanliness to be forced on them. Refuse and leaves are shovelled on pieces of bark and thrown by the entrance. In cold wet weather shells and food are cooked inside the shelter, and all kinds of waste are thrown on the rapidly increasing midden at the doorway. To camp amidst one's own filth is not regarded as unclean. Before the middens at old camps become overpowering or germinate an exterminating

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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YULENGOR HUT

Such a hut was used by the two women in Creation days

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THE POOL OF AMBIJ

[facing p151]